

CONSIDERATIONS  
ON THE  
SOCIETY OR ORDER  
OF A  
CINCINNATI;

LATELY INSTITUTED  
By the Major-Generals, Brigadier-Generals, and  
other Officers of the AMERICAN ARMY.

PROVING THAT IT CREATES  
A RACE OF HEREDITARY PATRICIANS,  
OR  
NOBILITY.

INTERSPERSED WITH REMARKS  
On its CONSEQUENCES to the FREEDOM  
and HAPPINESS of the REPUBLIC.

Addressed to the PEOPLE of SOUTH-  
CAROLINA, and their REPRESENTATIVES.

---

BY CASSIUS.

---

Supposed to be written by EDANUS BURKE, Esquire,  
one of the Chief Justices of the State of South-Carolina.

---

*Blow ye the Trumpet in Zion.*

*The Bible.*

---

PHILADELPHIA:

Printed and Sold by ROBERT BELL, in Third-Street,  
Price, one-sixth of a Dollar. M,DCC,LXXXIIIA.

2401A. 1783. 200

T O

# THE PEOPLE

## THEIR REPRESENTATIVES.



THE following publication is intended to convey a few observations to my fellow citizens, on a new Society or Institution lately established throughout the continent, composed of the Major-Generals, Brigadiers, and other Officers of our army. It is instituted by the name of "THE SOCIETY OF THE CINCINNATI;" and it has arrived to considerable strength and maturity already. For besides the Grand or *General Society* of this order, a subordinate or *State Society* is established in each state: and these again subdivided "into such districts as shall be directed by the State Societies." The *General Society* is to be held on the first Monday in May annually; so long as they shall deem necessary; and afterwards at least once in every three years. The *State Societies* are to meet the fourth of July annually, or oftner, if they shall find it expedient."

Major-General Baron Steuben is appointed *Grand Master of the Order*, under the more humble title of *President*; and each *State Society* as well as the *Grand one* has also its *President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and Vice-Treasurer*. Annual communications of the *States* with each other, by circular letters are enjoined: "And the *General Meeting* of the *Society*, shall consist of its officers, and a representation from each state in number not exceeding five, whose expences shall be borne by the respective *State Societies*." So that here are delegates to be sent to form a general convention or congress of the order. They have also instituted a badge of honour, or what they call "an *Order* by which its members shall be known and distinguished." It is a medal of gold in the figure of an eagle, with an inscription on the face and reverse, alluding to the time of establishing the order, and to their having saved the republic. And this badge of distinction, is to be suspended by a deep blue ribbon two inches wide, edged with white, descriptive of the *Union* between *America and France*;" and to be worn by each member, as the *French and British nobility* wear their stars and ribbons, the insignia of their *peerage*. They have already conferred the honour and freedom of their *Order* on his excellency the *French Ambassador*, his excellency the *Sieur Gerard*, lae minister plenipotentiary, the *count d'Estaing*, *count de Grasse*, *count de Barras*, the *chevalier de Touches*, *count Rochambeau*, and the *generals and colonels* of his army. And it is reported that several crowned heads and princes in Europe, are to dignify it by becoming honorary members of it. Congress for political reasons no doubt, winks at it; and no one state, nor body of men in any one of them, have given it the least opposition. The discretion of the commander in chief, which I take to be his distinguishing characteristic, is signal on this occasion; for he has appeared quite neutral in this business, if we except his becoming

ing

## ON THE CINCINNATI. 3

ing an honorary member of it. I believe the officers do not declare themselves to each other; and that on this occasion, there is too much truth in the remark of an able philosopher, "that there is no man who lets his nearest friend see the bottom of his heart."

The more I reflect on this institution, and the political consequences it will involve, the more am I filled with astonishment, that self created as it is, and coming upon us in so bold and questionable an appearance, so deeply planned, and closely executed, yet that it should have been so little attended to, that it is not even the subject of private conversation. Could I for a moment view this Order with indifference, it would be impossible not to smile, to behold the populace of America, in their town committees and town meetings, so keenly bent on petty mischiefs, in full chase and cry after a few insignificant tories, and running on regardless of an establishment, which ere long must strip the posterity of the middling and lower classes of every influence or authority, and leave them nothing but insignificance, contempt, and the wretched privilege of murmuring when it is too late. So thoughtless are the multitude!

My design at present is to shew, first, What this Order or Society seems to be; in the next place, To demonstrate what it really is, and will turn out to be; and lastly, To prove there is an absolute necessity of extirpating it altogether.

From the outside appearance of their *Association*, or instrument of writing which combines this Order, and which has been sent thro' the states by circular letters, it is nothing more than an "Association, Constitution, and Combination of the Generals, and other Officers of the Army, who have served three years, or were discharged by Congress, into a Society of Friends, to perpetuate the memory of the Revolution, and their own mutual friendship; to endure as long as they shall endure, or any of their eldest male posterity; and in failure thereof, the collateral branches who may be judged worthy of becoming its supporters and members: To attend incessantly to preserve inviolate the exalted rights and liberties of human nature, for which they fought and bled: To promote and cherish between the respective states, Union and National Honor: To render permanent, cordial affection, and the spirit of brotherly kindness among the officers: To extend acts of beneficence towards those officers and their families who may unfortunately be under the necessity of receiving it." They advance each a month's pay, and open a door for donations from others not of the society, and for the charitable purpose of raising a fund, as well as for the political one, of engaging the leading men of each state in the interests of the Order, they have the following rule: "And as there will at all times be men in the respective states, eminent for their abilities and patriotism, whose views may be directed to the same laudable objects with those of the Cincinnati; it shall be a rule to admit such characters, as honorary members of the society for their own lives only: Provided that the number of the honorary members does not exceed a ratio of one to four of the officers and their descendants."

The quotations I have made are the words of the General *Association*: so that it seems to be the offspring of patriotism, friendship, and humanity. And that many of the officers who have not closely viewed the subject, favour it from those principles, I have no doubt. But as several of them are equal in knowledge and abilities to any men in America, it is hardly possible but that some of them must see into the nature and consequences of the institution. For to come to the second part of my argument, it is in reality, and will turn out to be, an hereditary peerage; a nobility to them and their

## 4 CONSIDERATIONS

issue, and in default thereof, to the *collateral branches*: what the lawyers would call—A title of peerage of Cincinnati to them and their heirs male, remainder to their heirs general.

The sixth article of our confederation says, “Nor shall the United States in Congress assembled, nor any of them grant any title of nobility.” But the order of Cincinnati usurp a nobility without gift or grant, in defiance of Congress and the states, as I shall shew presently. And though the order cannot, at present be sanctified by legal authority, yet that makes nothing against the consequences which will ensue. Though the Order is self-created, and an infringement of a general law of the Union; yet if the courage of the officers does not fail them; if they but keep up with firmness and perseverance against opposition, for this will be but trifling, so unthinking are the people; if they have but patience, subtlety, and address to cloke their design under a pious name of raising a charitable fund; so as to make it go down only for a few years; even if they are obliged from policy to lay aside the *badge and blue ribbon*: My life for it, they will have leisure to laugh at, and master their opponents. And the next generation will drink as deep of noble blood, and a hereditary peerage be as firmly settled in each potent family, and rivetted in our government, as any order of nobility is in the monarchies of Europe. This Order is planted in a fiery, hot ambition, and thirst for power; and its branches will end in tyranny. The Cincinnati will soon be corrupted, and the spirit of the people depressed; for in less than a century it will occasion such an inequality in the condition of our inhabitants, that the country will be composed only of two ranks of men: the patricians or nobles, and the rabble. This is the natural result of an establishment, whose departure is so sudden from our open professions of republicanism, that it must give a thinking mind most melancholy forebodings. This creating of a nobility, and breaking through our constitution, just as we were setting out in the world, is making that liberty which the Almighty has given us, a means for feeding our pride; and turning the blessings of Providence into a curse upon us.

Had this order been created by Congress or our own legislature, even in violation of the confederation and of our laws, I should not think it a matter of such moment: dukes, earls, or peers of the Cincinnati, sanctified by an act of Assembly or of Congress, would be understood by all of us. Their pretensions and exclusive privileges, the mode of their trial for life and death, &c. ascertained. But the self-created Cincinnati, like a proud imperious man, would set no bounds to its claims. Jealous that it held not any thing on its own ambitious terms, as they had cut and carved titles for themselves and their posterity, they would be still grasping for every thing; and rising from one usurpation to another, as they succeeded.

Let us examining the ostensible reasons for instituting the Cincinnati. First, “to perpetuate the remembrance of the revolution.” But will not the historian more effectually transmit to posterity, the memory of the revolution, and the illustrious actions achieved in bringing it about? And as to “preserving inviolate the exalted rights of human nature; these rights will in my opinion be much better preserved inviolate by having no *distinct order* of patricians or nobility among us: which, however thought necessary to support the throne of a prince, or form a barrier between him and his people, is a bane and a curse to a republic; for unless you destroy the one, you cannot have the other.

Again. They will “attend incessantly to preserve inviolate the exalted rights of human nature.” Are there then, most illustrious Cincinnati,

Cincinnati, two sorts of rights belonging to human nature? Is there one kind, subordinate, and on a level with the humble condition of Plebeians? and others *more exalted*, which the citizens are incapable of preserving inviolate, without the *incessant* watching of a dignified order of patricians? They must mean this or nothing. The people of America, it seems, are not fit to be trusted with their own *national honor*, or their own affairs, unless the Order takes the superintendence and direction of them. Can contradiction be more strong and glaring? In one moment they institute an order, and raise a distinction, which looks down, as from an high mountain, on all beneath them: They have laid in ruins that fine, plain, level state of civil equality, over which the sight of the beholder passed with pleasure: which God laid out for our use and happiness, and which our Laws and the nature of a Republican government promised us: They have violated all; yet in the same breath, by way of a mask thrown over their doings, they spread before us the fine words last quoted. But the disguise is too thin: for in the name of Heaven, can any man in his senses believe that the remaining rights of the people which are yet left untouched, will not be invaded and violated, by men, who disdaining the condition of private citizens, as below them, left it, and mounted up to the elevated and exclusive dignity of hereditary title?

But say they, "an order of nobility will give strength, duration, and reverence to our government." Has not the war of America, I say, convinced mankind that society in the most trying conjunctures, and fiercest dangers, can do better without them? When we first set out we had scarcely a distinction among us: for the body of our people was chiefly composed of Yeomanry. But though they had no titles nor badges, they soon produced excellent officers, soldiers and statesmen: and every corner of America, at this moment, abounds with men, as well militia as continentals, as capable of command in cavalry or infantry, as any regular officers Europe can boast of. This military virtue of our citizens: their sense of dignity and contempt of danger: the gallant efforts they made: was not this, I say, the offspring of the equality and independent temper of men, who fought for themselves, and not for masters: and whose spirit was not trammelled or broken down by the oppression of an insolent nobility? This was that warm animating pride which disdained to look up to any human creature as a superior, which raised us armies, and fought campaigns without pay or covering: efforts so glorious, as never were, nor can possibly be made by any nation where a nobility have got a considerable footing.

But if this order prevails in our country, the generous gallant virtues of the present day will soon be extinguished, never to appear again. What Salust calls the *common disease of a nobility*, nobilitatis commune malum superbia & contemptus animus: pride and insolence on the one hand, and oppression and ringing habits on the other, will break the spirit of our children to such a degree of debasement, they would shortly be impressed in good earnest with the idea, that the independence of America was from the beginning ordained: that such an effusion of human life and human blood: so great a variety of glorious achievements and honourable sufferings through the war: that all this I say was effected, not for the good of the people, but for a few families to aggrandize themselves, and monopolize the power of the continent, and to enjoy the fruits of it.

The other pretext is, "to promote and cherish between the respective states, Union and National Honour." But I have the honour to tell Baron Steuben, that though an order of peerage may

## 6 CONSIDERATIONS

do very well under the petty princes of Germany, yet in America, it is incompatible with our freedom; and instead of being a bond of political union, it would on a future day, prove a source of *civil disjunction and misery*: by establishing two *distinct* orders; one whose foundation is the *Army*; the other composed of the *Commonalty*. Thus it opens a theatre for ignominious disjunctions, for jealousy and hatred, and ends in civil war, between these patricians and the people, if the latter had any spirit left. And as the Order would be firmly established by time, the world in less than an hundred years, would find its descendants a race of men distinct from the rest of society, with the eyes of all fixed upon them, as objects of such worship, that it is not at all improbable, but our children should find the Order setting the divinity of their institution into our pulpits, under a *sure divine* title. In a few generations hence, such are the extravagancies which enter into the heart of man, the peers of Cincinnati might consider themselves as deriving their lineage from heaven. Let us examine the story of those heroes celebrated in the two immortal poems of Homer and Virgil: strip it of the bewitching charms of poetry; and you shall find they afford not a better foundation for idolatry and the Yahoo-like worship of men, than the peers of our Order. The courage of Hector, engaged in defence of his country against a foreign invasion: The valour of Achilles in avenging an insult to his nation: The piety of *Aeneas* in saving his father and a few images of the Trojan Gods out of the ruins of his native city: I speak agreeable to truth and common sense, when I say that all these exploits have been equalled by the Cincinnati. And it is equally probable that they would produce in some future generation of American plebeians, such an admiration and idolatry, that would in the fervor of its operation, as in Rome of old, enable some leading man of the Order to set up a tyranny. Some sycophant poet would not be wanting to prostitute the talents which God gave him, for the vile purpose of dubbing with divinity, as Virgil did *Augustus*, a tyrant who had swallowed up the liberties of his country.

The Cincinnati at any rate would soon *have and hold* an exclusive right to offices, honors and authorities, civil and military. And the whole country besides themselves, a mere mob of plebeians, without weight or estimation; degraded in the eyes of our patricians, as the Roman people were by their republican nobility. These held the others as *Livy lays, in vix Diis immortalibus*: *as if they were odious to the very gods*; and as the Cincinnati soon would, held it an abomination to intermarry with them. This degradation of the people on one hand, and the insolence of the nobles on the other, was in Rome, as it would be with us, a political disease, which never ceased to distract that republic, until at last it occasioned its overthrow. Arising solely from the ignominious *disjunction* between the Commons, and the Patricians, as an hereditary order; who from the expulsion of the Tarquins, to the time of the Gracchi, about 200 years, produced such perpetual discord and tumults in that republic, that nothing but its good fortune and military virtue preserved it so long from destruction. At last when the people became corrupted, their dissensions swelled to open rupture, or civil war: Sylla heading the nobility, and Marius the commons. The latter being compleatly vanquished, the conqueror, as perpetual dictator, set up a tyranny, and exercised confiscation, banishment, and every other species of cruelty which marks a disorderly people. Still civil discord admitted of no cessation; for in a short time afterwards, the fire broke out with multiplied fury, under

## ON THE CINCINNATI.

under Cæsar, the leader of the commons, and Pompey, at the head of the nobility. The event is well known. Cæsar triumphed over his adversary, and over the liberty of his fellow citizens; and the whole ended in a cruel despotism. And thus so many wars carried on—so many illustrious actions performed by that gallant people, only to gratify the ambition of an order, similar to the Cincinnati, but in its origin by no means so respectable, as I shall presently shew; and finally to become the slaves of barbarous masters, the Roman Emperors.

I mention these few plain notorious facts, to prove, that the institution of this nobility is not the way to promote and cherish Union and *National Honour*. Out of it will arise *discord* and *not union*. And that the people should, without so much as saying a word about the matter, behold this poisonous *exotic* plant taking root throughout the land. That they should commit such a vile abuse of their liberty as to allow it, is a reproach upon human nature; and would, in the eyes of posterity, be a national dishonour to us. I have often thought that the revolution in America would reduce it to a certainty, whether mankind was destined by nature for liberty or slavery; for a republican government never before has had, what we call fair play, in any part of the globe. But the Order of Cincinnati would give a fatal wound to civil liberty thro' the world, and prove that all that Plato, Sidney, Locke and others have bequeathed to posterity on the subject of political happiness, though appearing well on paper, yet was no more than ideal pictures of a fine imagination. Our example too would serve to strengthen tyranny in Europe, by evincing that a people brought up under a monarchy, and accustomed to be governed by others, are too degenerate to govern themselves in a state of liberty; and that after all we have done, we still keep a hankering after the orders, titles, and trumpery we have been used to under the royal government, where the people are so bewitched, that abilities, virtue or wealth itself, are not such objects of reverence as a star or ribbon.

The following clause of the *Association*, I think, an extraordinary one. "The officers of the American army having generally been taken from the citizens of America, possess high veneration for the character of that illustrious Roman, *Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus*; and being resolved to follow his example, by returning to their citizenship, they think they may with propriety denominate themselves the society of the Cincinnati."

Then as they were taken from the citizens, why in the name of God not be contented "to return to citizenship," without usurping an hereditary order; or with what "propriety can they denominate" themselves from *Cincinnatus*, with an ambition to rank, as to aim at nothing less, than *Orium cum dignitate*, "rank and a *peage*?" Did that virtuous Roman, having subdued the enemies of his country, and returned home to tend his vineyard and plant his cabbages, did he confer an hereditary order of peerage on himself and his fellow soldiers? I answer, No; it was more than he dared to do. For a less crime, that republic, in the days of its liberty, put to death, banished or disgraced some of her citizens, as illustrious and renowned as any we have, without exception.

The Romans had learned from sad experience, a lesson which seems to be brought home to ourselves in the example before me; that military commanders acquiring fame, and accustomed to receive the obedience of armies, are generally in their hearts aristocracies, and enemies to the popular equality of a republic. That becoming

## 8 C O N S I D E R A T I O N S

becoming illustrious by their services, they are ever ready, under plausible appearances of justice and merit, to assume usurpations of the most pernicious tendency? The people first adore them with a stupid veneration, which swells their pride; enables them to form factions; procure followers; create divisions; aggrandize their families; split the state into divisions, and like Cæsar, Cromwell, and others, under the smoke they had created, raise themselves to despotism. This is the reason that in wise republics, such citizens were so often and so justly put out of the way; banished their country, or excluded from dignities or influence. And their fame and éclat was thought an ample reward to console them under it. It is probable therefore that it was as much through fear, as republican virtue, that Cincinnatus and his officers were restrained from instituting a new order: for I do not suppose they were either better or worse than our own. Only that republic had wise laws to bridle the ambition and control the factions of potent citizens, and we have as yet no such laws.

I know it will be denied, that the Order is, what I do boldly assert it to be, an *hereditary peerage*. Some of its members assume the cloak of political modesty, and under it talk, that they are no more dangerous than a city-corporation of "shop-keepers, taylors, or other mechanics; or like the Free Masons and other clubs who wear badges or medals." Here we see how ambition can assume all shapes and colours, and humble itself to the very dust to accomplish its purpose! This moment take upon them the superintendence of empire, the honour, union and happiness of nations, and the exalted rights of human nature; and the very next, prostrate themselves to the level of men, with whom to be compared on any other occasion, the Order would deem an insult. I say, that a body of military commanders, distinguished from the rest of society under an institution founded on the illustrious actions of so singular a revolution as that of America: invested with the exclusive privilege of wearing a badge of their order, honourable to themselves, as it is ignominious to the people; elevated above others, and in parity among themselves: These, I say, are peers of the realm, *pari digni*, and nothing more or less. And that this order being entailed on the *male issue*, and in default thereof, on the *collateral line*, makes it *hereditary*. And whether it be instituted by the legislature, who alone have the legal power to do it, or be usurped by the officers, it makes no difference in its consequences. For as I observed before, in one generation the order of Cincinnati will be established immovably. The rank, number and influence of the members; the remembrance of their glorious actions, still heightened by the propensity of mankind to the marvellous: all this, I say, will raise the order to grandeur, antiquity, veneration and arbitrary power, acquisitions which will become hereditary with the peerage, and once obtained, not one family of them will ever think of renouncing.

But in support of the order, it will be alledged, that the states cannot pay the army, the officers will be contented with this *bauble*, and they will not abuse it. " 'Tis like throwing a tub to a whale," say they. Should the states commit such a national iniquity, as not to pay their army, they merit eternal infamy, and to be *peer-ridden* into the bargain. And as to the officers resting satisfied with the *blue ribbon*, it is the nature of man never to be contented with any thing, nor secure of what he has, unless he be perpetually adding. And as this order would still be apprehensive of losing the exclusive honour and influence they had, they would eternally be caballing and working for more, to the disquiet of the government.

vernment. And admitting the present members would not abuse it, is any one certain, that their children will make no ill use of it? The officers can transmit to their posterity, their fortunes, their reputation, and the pecage of Cincinnati; but can they leave to them, as a legacy, that virtue which lately led them to encounter the hardships of a perilous war? Or when the present generation is off the stage, will the sons of our self-created patricians, who will not experience the adversity their fathers bore in defending their liberties; will they, finding themselves raised above their neighbours, agree to descend, and live on a footing of equality with them? Or will they not rather, relying on the rank and power of an aristocratic nobility, disdaining private men, nor standing in fear of public laws, usurp the offices, powers and influence of the republic, which should belong to the body of the people? Or in case any ambitious leader, or a few, should threaten the liberties of the commons, or Congress on a future day, invested with a revenue, a fleet and army, attempt a point of consequence: will they not support the one or the other, as it will be most likely to support their order? In such a dispute their weight would turn the scale; for the number of the peers of the order, reckoning honorary members (which their good policy would lead them to choose out of the first rate men) cannot be far short of ten thousand; and as they will be the principal men in America, to suppose that each can, by his influence, procure two or three followers, who will adhere to his interest and service, is a reasonable calculation. Here is a body of 20 or 30,000 men immediately; and every generation will be adding to the number.

Had our officers less merit and claim to the applause of their countrymen at home, and to fame abroad, I should not be so alarmed at this bold usurpation of theirs. For a class of men of little worth, could never have influence to render an institution of this nature detrimental to the freedom of their country. It would rather meet with ridicule, and dwindle into nothing. But it must be remembered, that a series of hardy, gallant, splendid actions, through a fierce and desperate conflict; their toils and sufferings: and their patience under them; and above all, the glorious success which crowned the whole: have rendered the officers of the American army, the most renowned band of men, that this day walk on the face of the globe. And was it as well acquainted as I am, with the temper of goodness and humanity which runs thro' the whole of them, they would be as much beloved as they are admired. Their bravery the world knows: But as it is not foreign to my subject, I shall give an example of their good sense and philanthropy, on a very eminent occasion. It will be a considerable aid to me, while I try to give an idea of their general character.

The southern army was encamped near Jacksonborough, and covered our assembly in 1782, while it was driving down the confederation business, which has made so much noise, and out of which daily multiply so many unforeseen mischiefs. And it may be worthy of remarking, that from the commander down to the ringed, ragged sentinel, the army in general held that act in derestation. The officers mixed with the members of both houses during the session, and opposed the measure with cool, gentleman-like reasoning; which I believe was one cause, that the list of the proscribed was no larger than it is. They could not account how the citizens of South Carolina, whose sufferings lasted only about 16 or 18 months, and most of whom had from the beginning of the trouble been speculating and making money, could be urged on by such

## 10 CONSIDERATIONS

such a fierce thirst for revenge, which they could not feel themselves: They who half naked and half starved, had passed thro' perils and necessity, and without pay or comfort suffered the extremities of climate, along from the walls of Quebec to the lines of Savannah, and many of whom, in provisos and prison ships, went thro' the fiery trial of British insolence and barbarity: they could not without grief and horror, behold the distempered rage of their countrymen, thrusting out into utter ruin, their fellow citizens, without so much as hearing what could be alledged in their defence. Their manly souls, taught to humble the despotism of Britain, and bring her tyrants to their feet, disdained the miserable triumph of entailing sorrow upon women and children. Ye illustrious men! May the hand of oppression never compel your sons to drink of the bitter cup of adversity! Or should the will of heaven desire them to suffer, may they find a friend to remember that their fathers were the friends of human nature under affliction. May an historian arise, who will think it a task as worthy a man of genius to record deeds of goodness, as acts of valour! But never, never, let so foul a stain be fastened on the human character, as that the very men, who with unfading honour, rescued their country from the galling yoke of foreigners, should lay the corner stone for erecting a tyranny themselves.

My observations here go to prove, that the order of Cincinnati, composed of our Major Generals, Brigadiers, and field officers, reinforced and firmly supported by all the potent families and leading first-rate men, in and out of the different legislatures and public bodies throughout America, whose influence and interest the deep policy of the Order has already determined to pre-engage as honorary members; that this body, I say, in consequence of their merit, services, and lustre of character, forms a very broad and respectable foundation for raising a hereditary nobility in America; and are much more likely to produce it, than were the heads and first founders of ancient or modern nobility in the old world.

Let us go up to the source of nobility among the Romans, and see whether it will bear a comparison with the Cincinnati, the fountain of American peerage. In the first age of that republic, they had no idea of instituting such an order. We have only to imagine a society of men, living in a state of simplicity, with fortunes on a level, each possessing no more than two acres of ground. A few old men were chosen for the legislature: distinguished for nothing but the experience of years, and an affection they were supposed to have for the people: hence they were called *patres* or *faibres*. But the descendants of these plain homespun families, in a few years by considering themselves as distinct from their fellow citizens: assuming pretensions: forming family unions; and cementing them by intermarriages: This policy alone, without title or badge of honor, laid in Rome the foundation of a nobility, with such pride and thirst of domineering, that even after monarchy was abolished, by the deposition of the Tarquin family, the people, by whose assistance it was brought about, gained but little by the bargain. For the great families having once got the government into their hands, and united all the powers of the monarchy and nobility in their own order: then I say, *every patrician turned out a Tarquin*, with this difference, that the whole body was worse, by as much as a thousand tyrants are a greater curse than a single one.

So simple and contrasted was the origin of peerage in that republic; as much inferior to the Cincinnati, the foundation of nobles in America, as the disorderly, plundering banditti, who first built their

## ON THE CINCINNATI. II

their cabins on the foundation of Rome, were beneath a corps of illustrious leaders, such as Washington, Greene, St. Clair, Moultrie, Wayne, and the rest of them. The beginning of Roman nobility may be compared to a small spring which forms the head of a great river: it made at first but a feeble stream; but running in a long tract of time it acquired strength from other rivulets. But the Cincinnati and its honorary members, is *that river* pretty nearly formed already: broad, deep and forcible, and swollen to such a height that rolling on in *direct lines*, and *collateral meanders*, it would in a short time rise into such a *flux*, as to overflow its banks, and lay the country round it in one dismal scene of ruin.

As to the modern nobility of Europe, it was formed out of the rude, barbarian Generals and field officers of the Goth and Vandal army. And if we believe Robertson, many of those titles were, like the Cincinnati, self-created \*. The British nobles or Barons sprung from the like origin: and their orders of knighthood particularly, had the most silly, trifling beginning. The knighthood of the garter took its rise, it is said, from the countess of Salisbury, in the reign of Edward III, dropping her garter while she was dancing. That of the Bath, from another idle story. The order of St. Andrew, very dignified formerly, from a dream of a superstitious prince of Scotland. That of St. Patrick, lately instituted among the Irish, (who, though it is only a link in the chain which ties them down, are, it seems, very fond of it,) from a legendary tale of a fanatic preacher: who, if he ever existed at all, had not half the learning or merit of Whitefield or Wesley. At least nobody will insist that the men or circumstances which gave existence to those orders, were so likely to produce an *hereditary distinction*, as the American Revolution and the Cincinnati, the fame of whose exploits resounds through the world.

If we trace nobility up to the head in Venice and other parts of Europe, we shall find it in every nation small and contemptible: but that the very creating a *public distinct order*, uniformly terminated in every country, in servitude to the people. For the consequences of nobility all over Europe, as it would soon turn out in America, are deplorable. There: instead of being pillars for supporting the crown, as judge Blackstone is pleased to call them, peers are actually tools and rivets for driving and clenching poverty, meanness and abasement on the people who are chilled and floated by the noble families, as the brush and under wood in the forest, is overshadowed and flattered by the towering oaks above.

But although the force of those remarks is well known to men of sense of the army, yet they cannot be contented with the reputation which their services have secured to them, unless they appropriate an hereditary peerage. *Except their pay*, I cannot see any thing they want to satisfy them, unless that their *éclat* being so universal, popularity has, like a mistress after possession, lost her charms in their eyes: they consider her too common, and seek some other beauty out of the ordinary way. Are not their fellow-citizens already as far below many of them, as the earth is below the Heavens? Or can the glory of a human creature go higher, than it has carried some of them? Is it not enough that every

\* " One step more compleated their usurpations, and rendered them unalienable. With an ambition no less enterprizing and more preposterous, they appropriated to themselves titles of honor, as well as offices of power and trust."

## 12 CONSIDERATIONS

every muse will raise trophies over their urns, which neither the revolution of ages, nor power of fortune can demolish? But all this, it seems, is nothing to the all-grasping, insatiable ambition of our Generals and field officers: unless they have a *guaine* *in* flock upon their family, and a badge or bauble dangling at their button-hole; which answers no other purpose in the world but to introduce the misfortunes I have been pointing out, and to draw upon them the well-meant suspicion and jealousy of every man of any thought on the continent. Did these officers but consider what reputation and satisfaction they fly from, they would dissolve their institution at once, and sit down contented with the love and veneration of their fellow citizens.

This order will in time prove mischievous throughout the continent; but its effects will be sooner and more severely felt in South Carolina: and to shew this, I shall make a few remarks on the nature of our constitution, as it stands at present.

The government of this country, as formed by the constitution in 1778, was supposed to be a democracy. If this was the case, which I shall not dispute, it naturally ran into an aristocracy. The nature of the climate and fertility of the soil: The unequal distribution of property: The gentry below holding the government of the state through the war; and particularly, the want in the interior settlements, of men of knowledge and capacity for business: All this combined to establish the dominion and authority of a few below. But whatever its form was before the reduction of Charleston, it is this moment a pure, simple aristocracy, of about 1000 or 1500 families. The rest of the citizens are excluded from any share or interference in the government; although most of them are natives: capital settlers of old families; good whigs; and the descendants too of men, who first planted this country, and helped to raise it to its present flourishing greatness. The reader may have to learn, that the aristocracy of South Carolina, is, and will continue to be *hereditary*: for unless the exclusion act be repealed, it will descend to the children of those who now have the government in their hands: while the posterity of the protection-men (as they are called) will be for ever shut out, as a consequence of their fathers forfeiture and degradation under that law.

This revolution (and I cannot call it by any other name) was effected by law, in the famous Jacksonborough assembly—whereby the great body of the people was debarred from the right of voting. The law is perpetual: and the enormous power it vested in the few, was further augmented by the Confiscation Act, which broke up ländy able families; and the Amercement Law, super-added insult and degradation to others: those three laws, together with the novel distinction which the few set up between themselves, and such as made a temporary submission to the British army, seemed to have done every thing necessary for concentrating in the few, the powers and weight of monarchy and of nobles. But the unfortunate *Commons* of this country received another blow from the Assembly which sat last January. Instead of redressing public calamities, it degraded the citizens, by forcing them on the humiliating necessity of petitioning, and cringing, in order to get off the lists. Their petitions, I would recommend to the perusal of him who will write of our affairs: and it will give him the heart-ake, if he possesses the independent, humane spirit of a gentleman: or can feel how much more bitter than gall is the severity, and viler than slavery itself, is that debasement, to which man armed with power, and goaded on by passion, is capable of reducing

ing a fellow citizen. The more we look into the Jacksonborough business, the more do the political misfortunes of it cloud upon our view: like a conflagration in a city, to the ravages it has already made; it is, according to the direction of the winds, hourly adding more, that were never foreseen nor thought of. And it may be truly said to have turned its fury against the incendiaries who help to light it: for most of them were staunch republicans, and passionately fond of liberty. But from their wanton, extravagant abuse of their power as legislators, they have been the melancholy cause, that the very name of a democracy, or government of the people, now begins to be hateful and offensive.

To apply the force of this remark here, I must observe, that in the Jacksonborough proceedings, our first-rate men were the leaders and drivers, till the business was gone through. For the others with hearts fully bent on it, had not heads to contrive a mischief of such magnitude. But after it was over, the gentry below, discovered more inclination to undo what was past: and were touched more with compassion than the other, for the miseries they had created. I believe this was more owing to the effects of education, which humanises the mind, than to policy, in the ways of which they are not as yet sufficiently hackneyed, however the thing itself has gained them considerable weight, while the democracy is sunk in ruin. For the generality begin to look up to the few, as alone possessing the prudence and policy of a civilized people, and alone worthy of holding the reins of the republic; while the democratic part of our Assembly are eyed, as unfeeling and inconsiderate, and making no scruple to abuse their power; even to the trampling on the laws and rights of their fellow citizens, for the glorious exploit of hunting down a Tory. In short, the public opinion and power of the government, is on the side of the aristocracy, at the same time that the spirit of the people is thoroughly broken. In other countries governments, like the human body, have had their growth, perfection and decay: but ours, like an untimely birth, suffered an abortion before it was in maturity fit to come into the world.

These remarks may appear trivial to some of my readers: but they are worthy, in my opinion, the attention of the philosopher and historian. They serve to shew, that the freedom of a country may be overturned by causes imperceptible to the multitude: and that when popular assemblies are carried away by violent passions, and strike at persons instead of things, they are then closely working for the aggrandisement of others: and while they avenge party injuries on petty enemies, only lay a snare for that liberty which should be held most dear to them and their posterity.

To hear some thoughtless people boast of our democracy, when it does not exist, is pleasant: for our government, I have shewn, is an aristocracy: and will be in a few years as fierce and oppressive as that of Poland or Venice, if the Order of Cincinnati be suffered to take root and spread in it, for it will compleat what the Jacksonborough policy has left undone.\* These fresh slips of nobility will spring up, overshadow and prevent the growth and flourishing

\* It seems no one who took protection will be admitted to the honour of the Order. Is not this asserting a superiority, at once ruinous to the equality of a republic? If the peers of the Order already draw such a line of separation, I would not wish to infinite to what lengths their children will carry the distinction against the posterity of protection-men.

ishing of our youth; and soon cover under one dark shade of vile insignificance and subserviency, the descendants of the middle and lower order of the virtuous few, and protection-men; and after perishing every fair plant throughout the state, they will shoot forth branches wide-spreading on every side: and finally yield such bitter fruit, as will work a fatal poison to the little political health and happiness there is left us.

I have proved I hope to the reader's satisfaction, that the Cincinnati creates two distinct orders amongst us. 1st. A race of hereditary Nobles, founded on the military, together with the powerful families, and first rate, leading men in the state, whose view it will ever be, to rule: and 2d. The people or plebeians, whose only view is not to be oppressed; but whose certain fate it will be to suffer oppression under the institution: I have shewed that it is a deep laid contrivance to beget, and perpetuate family grandeur in an aristocratic Nobility, to terminate at last in monarchical tyranny. And I shall now pass on to point out the constitutional means of opposing it.

I feel sensibly that the few remarks I have to make, are too bold and decisive to meet the approbation of some men. But if there be among my readers one, who merits the name of a republican, I have the confidence to believe his opinion will go along with mine.

To crush this Order, then, without embroiling the state, there is but one way. Let the legislature immediately enter into spirited resolutions against it; let them tell the Order, and the world, that however pious or patriotic the pretence, yet any political combination of military commanders, is, in a republican government, extremely hazardous, and highly censurable. But that instituting exclusive honours and privileges of an Hereditary Order, is a daring usurpation on the sovereignty of the republic; a dangerous insult to the rights and liberties of the people, and a fatal stab to that principle of equality, which forms the basis of our government; to establish which the people fought and bled as well as the Cincinnati; though the latter are now taking every measure to rob them of the credit, and of the fruits of it. If this would not do, and the Order still go on; yet such a resolve would have a good effect. It would, like Ithuriel's spear in Milton, touch the Order; and however plausible the external appearance, under which it now sits transformed, the resolution would oblige it, as the fallen angel in paradise, to start up in its own true hideous shape and likeness; and then we should know how to grapple with it. And afterwards, though I am willing to consider our officers as the plank, which bore us through the storm safe to land, yet I am one that would not let it be the means of drowning us in a calm, within the harbour. The examples of the wisest, and most renowned republics of which history furnishes any account, and the opinion of the ablest political writers, will support me in a doctrine, which I should discuss on the present occasion, if I were certain that our citizens, for whose information I am writing, were good stuff for republicans.

With regard to myself, I will be candid to own, that although I am morally certain the institution will entail upon us the evils I have mentioned; yet I have not the most certain idea, that it will come to a dissolution. The first class, or leading gentry in the state, and who will always hold the government, will find their interest in supporting a distinction that will gratify their ambition, by removing them far above their fellow citizens. The middling order of our gentry, and substantial land holders, may see its tendency, but they can take no step to oppose it; having little to do with the government.

## ON THE CINCINNATI. 15

government. And the lower class, with the city populace, will never reason on it, till they feel the smart; and then they will have neither the power nor capacity for a reformation. Besides, the society will have more adherents from another quarter than they are aware of. The seeds of internal division, and a variety of humours are thick sown in this country. The legislature bearing hard on many families, and individuals: public and private partiality and injustice: malecontents biased in favour of monarchy: all this will raise a party, who out of hatred to the government of the people, will range themselves under the banners of any man or faction, to promote its interest, and be avenged.

These things I know too well, to entertain the vain hope of any individual succeeding in opposition. But although I foresee the consequences, yet I think it a point of duty to give this public testimony of my dislike to the Order. I trust its members will pardon me, if I shall ever hold it ignominious, that those gallant citizens, who with as much valour and perseverance, though not with the same éclat, as the continental officers, stepped forth and assisted in subduing the Lion, should submit to be degraded by creatures of their own rank and condition.

## C A S S I U S.

Charleston, October 10, 1783.

---

## P O S T S C R I P T.

SINCE the foregoing publication was in the press, a set of "Rules and Bye-Laws of the Society of Cincinnati est. blis. in South-Carolina," have been printed and handed about in this city. I have perused their rules and I am more convinced than ever, that the institution is one of the most extraordinary fictions, which the story of republics furnishes any account of; that my notion of it, my argument on the subject, and my apprehensions concerning its consequences, are well founded. I shall transcribe the first rule, and conclude with a few remarks. It runs thus:

"The State Society accedes to the propositions and rules transmitted to Maj. Gen. Moultrie, by Maj. Gen. Heath and Steuben, respectively, on the 20th May, and — day of June last; with this reservation, that if the said propositions or rules, should by any construction be held obligatory on the society, to interfere in any shape whatsoever, with the civil polity, of this or any of the United States, or the United States in general, this society will not deem themselves bound thereby: They prizeing too highly the civil liberties of their country, and their own rights as citizens, to consent that a military society, should in any sense dictate to civil authority."

Here is a candid fair acknowledgment, that no small danger was to be apprehended to lurk under the institution of a military society. They disclaim, it is true, all sinister views in themselves; and so may the Grand Order, although they let the cat out of the bag too soon, make us the same fine promises in some future resolution. Their prizeing too highly the liberties of their country, and their own rights as citizens, is all the security we have against them.

But I would ask men of knowledge among them, if there be one example in the world of an ambitious man or powerful faction, who

## 16 . CONSIDERATIONS

to bring about their designs, did not pretend to be public benefactors - warm advocates for the public; and wonderfully careful of the civil liberties of their country? Is not this the surest way of undermining? When Cromwell and his Major Generals, those scourges of monarchy, and champions for popular government, when they were executing their fine schemes, did they tell the world they intended to usurp the sovereignty, though this was their design? Or did not they amuse even their own party with preaching and canting about religion and liberty? Were their usurpations the less so, because they fought well, served their country, and made fair promises?

The second rule of the State Order, tells us, "the principal end of the Society, is to maintain their indigent officers and their widows, and to maintain and educate their indigent children." For my own part, I entertain not an idea of such degeneracy in the state, as to suppose it will not make a decent provision for them. But for the purpose of a charitable use, to entail a nobility on the Cincinnati, which will entail bondage on the people, is charity with a witness! It is like that sort of benevolence that would introduce the plague, in order to get rid of a quartan ague.

F I N I S H E D

### 9 JU 64 Captain Cook's Last Voyage.

Just Published, and now Selling at BELL's BOOK STORE, near St. Paul's Church in Third-Street. Price, One Dollar and One Third of a Dollar.

The TWO VOLUMBS complete, of this much celebrated four years voyage, being an Authentic Narrative of

### A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean:

Performed by capt. Cook and capt. Clerke, in his Britannic majesty's ships, the Resolution and Discovery, in the years, 1776, 1777, 1778, 1779, and 1780. Including a faithful account of all their discoveries in this last voyage, the unfortunate death of captain Cook, at the island of O-winy-ee, and the return of the ships to England under capt. Gore.

Also, a large Introduction, exhibiting an account of the several Voyages round the globe; with an abstract of the principal expeditions to Hudson's Bay, for the discovery of a North-West Passage.—By an Officer on Board the Discovery.

Also, lately published and now selling, Price one Quarter Dollar,

### BELL'S Sale Catalogue

Of a large Collection of New and Old Books, consisting of several thousand Volumes, in Arts, Sciences, and Entertainment, for Persons of all Denominations, with the selling Price printed to each Book, now on Sale, at said Bell's Book Store, near St. Paul's Church, in Third Street.

\* Said Bell either buys or sells Books on Commission, for those who please to employ him.